

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: EAIR, IT
SUBJ: CIVAIR: GOI THREAT TO PAN AM FLIGHTS BEYOND ROME

REF: (A) STATE 196449, (B) ROME 14267

1. ON AUGUST 4, PAN AM FLIGHT 110 EASTWARD ROME TO ISTANBUL CARRYING 129 PASSENGERS TICKETED USA PLUS 230 BOARDED AT ROME FOR TOTAL 359 WAS AGAIN REFUSED TAKEOFF PERMISSION BY ROME CONTROL TOWER OPERATOR UNTIL FRANTIC CONSULTATIONS INVOLVING EMBASSY, PAN AM REP GUZZARDO AND CIVILAVIA OFFICIALS. FLIGHT WAS PERMITTED TAKE OFF AFTER ABOUT ONE HOUR DELAY. REASON GIVEN FOR ROME CONTROL TOWER OPERATOR'S ACTION WAS HIS "MIS-READING" OF MESSAGE SENT BY CIVILAVIA TO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) IN CONNECTION WITH PREVIOUS DAY'S INTERFERENCE (SEE REFTEL B).

2. FOLLIWING INCIDENT ABOVE, A/ECMIN CALLED ON CHIEF OF ECONOMIC DIRECTORATE MFA AND PRESENTED NOTE ALONG LINES REFTEL A. IN DISCUSSION THAT FOLLOWED, EMBOFF EXPRESSED STRONG CONCERN ABOUT DAY-TO-DAY INTERFERENCE,
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HOPE THAT GOI WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT CONTINUE TAKE ARBITRARY ACTION ON TRNSIT PASSENGER SITUATION AND POINTED OUT THAT CAPACITY IS ISSUE THAT CAN BE TAKEN UP IN AUTUMN MEETING. MFA OFFICIAL MACCHIA SAID HE HAS JUST COMPLETED DRAFT OF RESPONSE TO OUR PREVIOUS NOTE ON THIS PROBLEM (REFTEL B), WHEREIN THE GOI MAINTAINS ITS POSITION, NAMELY, THAT FIFTH FREEDOM PASSENGERS INCLUDE ALL

PASSENGERS, WHETHER TICKETED IN USA OR BOARDING IN ROME FOR A FIFTH FREEDOM DESTINATION. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT DAY-TO-DAY PROBLEM WILL BE EASED BY A RELAXATION OF APPLYING THIS DEFINATION UNTIL AUGUST 15, BUT WAS IN NO POSITION TO SAY WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER THAT.

3. CIVILAVIA OFFICIAL CALLED PAN AM REP GUZZARDO MRONING OF AUGUST 5 AND MET WITH HIM IN WHAT GUZZARDO TERMED "A FRIENDLY DISCUSSION," POITING OUT TREMENDOUS PRESSURES ON CIVILAVIA NOT ONLY FROM ITALAIN FLAG CARRIER BUT OTHER INATIONAL CARRIERS. HE TOLD GUZZARDO THAT CIVILAVIA WOULD "GO EASY" ON CAPACITY UNTIL AUGUST 15, MEANING THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER DAY-TO-DAY OBSTRUCTION OF FLIGHTS. AFTER THAT, HE SAID, GOI WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT PERMIT PAN AM TO LOAD CAPACITY BEYOND 180 PASSENGERS PER FLIGHT, INCLUDING PASSENGERS TICKETED US AND TRANSIT PASSENGERS BOARDING AT ROME.

4. COMMENT: CONVERSATION WITH MFA AND CIVILAVIA OFFICIALS REPORTED PARAGRAPHS 2 AND 3 SHOULD MEAN NO MORE INTERFERENCE FOR TIME BEING. HOWEVER, BOTH CONSERVATIONS POINT TO ANOTHER CRISIS AUGUST 16, AT WHICH TIME GOI INTENDS TO ENFORCE FLIGHT-BY-FLIGHT CAPACITY CONTROL LIMITED TO 180 PASSENGERS, AS STATED ABOVE. FROM INDICATIONS AT THIS POINT IN TIME, HIGH-LEVEL APPROACH IN WASHINGTON TO ITALIAN EMBASSY WOULD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALSO SEEM NECESSARY IF MID-AUGUST CRISIS IS TO BE AVOIDED. END COMMENT.HOLMES

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